

TO: Inquirers, Diocesan Clergy, and Others

FROM: The Very Rev'd Paul M. Bailey
Chair, The Commission on Ministry

The Diocese of Louisiana welcomes inquirers into a period of vocational discernment. The discoveries you make during this time may lead you to pursue service as a member of the laity, a deacon, or a priest. As you enter this process, please know that you are being held in our prayers, that God's deepest longings for you may be brought to fulfillment.

All baptized persons are called to minister in Christ's name, identifying their gifts and serving Christ's mission at all times and in all places. Specific roles express our baptismal identity in accordance with God's calling to each of us to use our unique gifts most fully. In order to assist a person to identify the role into which God may be calling him/her, a formal process of discernment is helpful. Be mindful that such a discernment process requires time and commitment from inquirer, sponsoring priest, and other diocesan leaders. It is also a process that falls under the direct authority and supervision of the Bishop. There are times when this process may seem difficult and confusing and it is a bit different for each individual. Should the discernment lead to a call related to holy orders, the personal journey then becomes a public one as well, and the call is further evaluated by the church at large.

We understand that vocational discernment is not just a matter of prayerful attentiveness, but also the circumstances in which one's life is lived. Therefore, participants in the process will be invited to examine at least these four significant areas of their lives: spiritual, vocational, health—physical and mental, and financial. During this time, questions will be explored about a person's spiritual gifts, leadership, prayer life, competencies, life and family circumstances, money, sacrifice, and many other areas of experience. It is realistic to allow at least a year for the discernment process to unfold in a thoughtful and unhurried way

We in the diocese understand that vocational discernment can be arduous and risky; the road may be difficult and sometimes seem very lonely. We welcome the opportunity to be your companion along the way, and will do our best to prayerfully discern God's will for your life from our canonical and pastoral perspectives. And may God's blessing be upon you in the journey ahead.

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